

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A patent information searching apparatus for searching based on a search criterion entered by a user, the patent information searching apparatus comprising:

a database that stores a plurality of pieces of patent information data as search
5 targets;

a field information holding unit ~~operable to hold~~ holding, for each of a plurality of user IDs and search purposes corresponding to procedures relating to patent, field information as display flags that correspond one-to-one to data-entry fields to be used by the user for entering the search criterion, ~~and that each display flag indicates~~ indicating whether or not to display a
10 corresponding one of the data-entry fields, and further hold character string data for displaying names of categories of the data-entry fields, and character string data for displaying names of the data-entry fields[[]], each data-entry field being categorized in any of the categories including a classification category, a number category, a date category, a unique-name category and a text category;

a category display unit ~~operable to display~~ displaying a list of the categories using
15 the character string data for displaying the names of the categories;

a category receiving unit ~~operable to receive~~ receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more categories from the list of the categories and a user ID of the user;

a field list display unit ~~operable to display~~ displaying a list of data-entry fields in
20 each of the selected categories using the character string data for displaying the names of the

data-entry fields, and not to display a list of data-entry fields in the other categories that are not selected;

25 a field receiving unit ~~operable to receive~~ receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more data-entry fields that are to be used for conducting the search from the data-entry fields displayed in the list;

an update unit ~~operable to update~~ updating the field information by setting display flags corresponding to the user ID and the selected data-entry fields and clearing display flags corresponding to the user ID and data-entry fields not selected by the user;

30 a field display unit ~~operable~~ displaying, in accordance with the field information, to ~~display~~ the data-entry fields for which the display flags for the user ID have been set, and not ~~display~~ displaying the data-entry fields for which the display flags for the user ID have been cleared;

35 a data searching unit ~~operable to receive~~ receiving the search criterion entered in the data-entry fields displayed by the field display unit, and search for data matching the received search criterion; and

a search result display unit ~~operable to display~~ displaying a result of the search conducted by the data searching unit.

2.-4. (Cancelled)

5. (Previously Presented) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 1, wherein

the category display unit displays the list of the categories on a screen where the data-entry fields are displayed by the field display unit,

5 the field list display unit displays the list of the data-entry fields on the screen
where the data-entry fields are displayed by the field display unit, and

 the field display unit updates the displayed data-entry fields immediately when
the field receiving unit receives the selection of the data-entry fields.

6.-12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently Amended) A patent information searching method for searching,
using a patent information searching apparatus, for a desired piece of patent information data
based on a search criterion entered by a user, the patent information searching apparatus
comprising:

5 a database that stores a plurality of pieces of patent information data as search
targets; and

 a field information holding unit ~~operable to hold~~ holding, for each of user IDs and
search purposes corresponding to procedures relating to a ~~patent~~ patent field information as
display flags that correspond one-to-one to data-entry fields to be used by the user for entering
10 the search criterion, and that each indicates whether or not to display a corresponding one of the
data-entry fields, and further hold character string data for displaying names of categories of the
data-entry fields , and character string data for displaying names of the data-entry fields, each
data-entry field being categorized in any of the categories including a classification category, a
number category, a date category, a unique-name category and a text category, and

15 the patent information searching method comprising:

 a category display step of displaying a list of the categories using the character
string data for displaying the names of the categories;

a category receiving step of receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more categories from the list of the categories, and receiving a user ID of the user;

20 a field list display step of displaying a list of data-entry fields in each of the selected categories using the character string data for displaying the names of the data-entry fields, and not to displaying a list of data-entry fields in the other categories that are not selected;

a field receiving step of receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more data-entry fields that are to be used for conducting the search from the data-entry fields displayed in
25 the list;

an update step of updating the field information by setting display flags corresponding to the user ID and the selected data-entry fields and clearing display flags corresponding to the user ID and data-entry fields not selected by the user;

a field display step of, in accordance with the field information, displaying the
30 data-entry fields for which the display flags for the user ID have been set, and not displaying the data-entry fields for which the display flags for the user ID have been cleared;

a data searching step of receiving the search criterion entered in the data-entry fields displayed in the field display step, and searching for data matching the received search criterion; and

35 a search result display step of displaying a result of the search conducted in the data searching step.

14. (Currently Amended) A patent information searching program for searching, using a patent information searching apparatus, for a desired piece of patent information data

based on a search criterion entered by a user, the patent information searching apparatus comprising:

5 a database that stores a plurality of pieces of patent information data as search targets; and

 a field information holding unit ~~operable to hold~~ holding, for each of user IDs and search purposes corresponding to procedures relating to a patent, field information as display flags that correspond one-to-one to data-entry fields to be used by the user for entering the search
10 criterion, and that each indicates whether or not to display a corresponding one of the data-entry fields, and further hold character string data for displaying names of categories of the data-entry fields, and character string data for displaying names of the data-entry fields, each data-entry field being categorized in any of the categories including a classification category, a number category, a date category, a unique-name category and a text category, and

15 the patent information searching program causes the patent information searching apparatus to execute:

 a category display step of displaying a list of the categories using the character string data for displaying the names of the categories;

 a category receiving step of receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more
20 categories from the list of the categories, and receiving a user ID of the user;

 a field list display step of displaying a list of data-entry fields in each of the selected categories using the character string data for displaying the names of the data-entry fields, and not to displaying a list of data-entry fields in the other categories that are not selected;

a field receiving step of receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more data-
25 entry fields that are to be used for conducting the search from the data-entry fields displayed in
the list;

an update step of updating the field information by setting display flags
corresponding to the user ID and the selected data-entry fields and clearing display flags
corresponding to the user ID and data-entry fields not selected by the user;

30 a field display step of, in accordance with the field information, displaying the
data-entry fields for which the display flags for the user ID have been set, and not displaying the
data-entry fields for which the display flags for the user ID have been cleared;

a data searching step of receiving the search criterion entered in the data-entry
fields displayed in the field display step, and searching for data matching the received search
35 criterion; and

a search result display step of displaying a result of the search conducted in the
data searching step.

15. (Previously Presented) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 1,
wherein

the data-entry fields categorized in the classification category are Classification
by four industrial property laws, IPC, FI, and F Term,

5 the data-entry fields categorized in the number category are Application Number,
Publication Number, International Application Number, International Publication Number,
Unexamined Patent Publication Number, Examined Patent Publication Number, Registration
Number, Priority Number, Related Application Number, and Number of Appeal,

the data-entry fields categorized in the date category are Date of Filing, Date of
10 Publication of Application, Date of Filing of International Application, Date of Publication of
International Application, Date of Publication of Unexamined Patent Application, Date of
Domestic Re-Publication of PCT International Application, Date of Publication of Official
Gazette, Date of Publication of Examined Patent Application, Date of Registration, Date of
Publication for Registered Patent, and Date of Filing of Application Claiming Priority,

15 the data-entry fields categorized in the unique-name category are
Applicant/Right-Holder, Inventor, Representative, Examiner, and Designated Country, and

the data-entry fields categorized in the text category are Title of the Invention,
Detailed Description of the Invention, Claim(s), Field of the Invention, Description of the Prior
Art, Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention, Means for Solving the Problem(s), Embodiment
20 of the Invention, Effect of the Invention, Brief Description of the Drawings, Description of
Characters, Abstract, Abstract + Claim(s), and Full Text.

16. (Currently Amended) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 1,
wherein

the field receiving unit receives from the user, a selection of two or more data-
entry fields that are to be used for conducting the search from the data-entry fields displayed in
5 the list,

the update unit updates the field information by setting display flags
corresponding to the two or more selected data-entry fields and clearing display flags
corresponding to data-entry fields not selected by the user, and

the field display unit, in accordance with the field information, simultaneously
10 displays the two or more data-entry fields for which the display flags have been set, and not
display the data-entry fields for which the display flags have been cleared.

17. (Previously Presented) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 1
further comprising:

a user ID input unit to accept a user ID wherein the display flags are associated
with the user ID such that the display flags are preserved when the user ID is accepted at a
5 subsequent period of time.

18. (Previously Presented) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 17,
wherein the display flags have a value of 1 if the display flags have been set, and the display
flags have a value of 0 if the display flags have been cleared.